

Committee on Government Reform



MEDIA ADVISORY

**For Immediate Release
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Government Reform Committee Field Hearings:

Emerging from Isabel:

A Review of FEMA's Preparation for and Response to Affected Areas in the Hampton Roads Region

**What: COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM OVERSIGHT HEARING
"Emerging from Isabel: A Review of FEMA's Preparation for and Response
to Affected Areas in the Hampton Roads Region"**

When/Where: OCTOBER 10, 2003

9 a.m. – Webb University Center, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia

1:30 p.m. – Chesapeake City Council Chambers, Chesapeake, Virginia

Background:

On Friday, October 10, 2003, the Committee on Government Reform will conduct a two-part full committee oversight field hearing entitled, "Emerging from Isabel: A Review of FEMA's Preparation for and Response to Affected Areas in the Hampton Roads Region." The first hearing will be held at 9:00 A.M. in the Webb University Center of Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. The second will be held at 1:30 P.M. in the Chesapeake City Council Chambers, 300 Cedar Road, Chesapeake, Virginia.

Rep. Ed Schrock will participate in the morning hearing.

Rep. Randy Forbes will participate in the afternoon hearing.

Rep. Bobby Scott will participate in both hearings.

Hurricane Isabel was one of the worst storms in history to hit the Hampton Roads area. It inflicted death, injury and severe damage on the entire region. At least eight deaths in the region are attributed to the storm. Transportation was dramatically affected, particularly with the closure of the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels. The Midtown Tunnel is a vital artery to the region and is still closed and not scheduled to be reopened until October 18. This is wreaking havoc with business and personal travel in the entire

area. Countless roads were rendered impassable by downed trees, power lines and debris. Houses and businesses were destroyed. Virtually the entire area lost power during the storm. Economic losses were equally severe. Schools and businesses were shut down for days. Businesses were looted and many people in the region were left to fend for themselves.

The Government Reform Committee has a vital interest in the government's response to the damage caused by Hurricane Isabel to the Hampton Roads region. It is critical that the federal, state and local governments plan and act in a coordinated, efficient manner, not only in response to future natural disasters, but also to potential terrorist acts. The federal government, Commonwealth of Virginia and local jurisdictions have taken a number of actions to improve coordination of emergency preparedness efforts. Since the private sector owns most of the critical infrastructure in the Hampton Roads region and across the country, it is important for the private and public sector to work closely to protect the region's infrastructure.

The hurricane and our response to it mark an important opportunity to reassess the Hampton Roads region's readiness and assure that plans are workable and will meet the needs of all those involved.

WITNESSES

Norfolk hearing- on the Campus of ODU

Panel One

Eric Tolbert, Director of the Response Division, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Panel Two

The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety, Commonwealth of Virginia

Panel Three

Gregory Cade, Fire Chief/Emergency Management Coordinator
City of Virginia Beach

Ron Keys, Director of Emergency Services
City of Norfolk

Curt Shaffer, Director, Plans, Analysis, and Emergency Operations Branch,
Police Division, City of Hampton

Chesapeake hearing – Chesapeake City Hall

Panel One

Eric Tolbert, Director of the Response Division, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Panel Two

The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety, Commonwealth of Virginia

Panel Three

David Jolly, Director of Public Safety
Dinwiddie County

Richard O. Childress, Director of Emergency Management
Isle of Wight County

Steve Herbert, City Manager/Director of Emergency Services
City of Suffolk

Steve Best, Fire Chief/Director of Emergency Operations
City of Chesapeake

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